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PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

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RELIGIOUS education should be conformed in its aim and subject-matter to the standards of modern science. It must fit into the general program of organic and psychic development that nature has sketched in the laws of individual and social life. Without encroaching unduly upon the education given in the public schools, it must nevertheless draw more of its material from the same sources, interpreting and using this material for religious ends. We can never have a complete religion or a complete science until the two types of knowledge and experience are reciprocally interpreted. If this cannot be done in the public schools, then it must be done through religious agencies. This is not to say that the Bible shall yield its place to scientific material. It means merely that the two complementary bodies of knowledge shall be mutually related in such a way as to give the child, not only religious ideals and impulses, but also a command of natural things and forces that will make these ideals and impulses really efficient.

Surely something is wrong with the aim and subject-matter of religious education when churches are filled with people, not only in the pews, but also in the pulpits, who, while professing a theological salvation, evidently violate the laws of life in their own bodies, in their emotional and intellectual natures, and in their economic and moral relations to society. The worst symptom in the present life of the church is not the falling off in attendance or contributions. It is the organic and psychical degeneration of men and women who attend and contribute—who believe they are “saved,” and yet, estimated by every physiological and psychological standard, are not. A belief in a type of salvation that encourages neglect of the body, and thus undermines the physical basis of life, inevitably leads to organic

disease or insanity, or both. A belief in a type of salvation that leads to emotional excess favors the final exhaustion of emotional sensibilities or their perversion in some form of insanity. A belief in a type of salvation that results in arrest of development of the intellect entails upon its votaries progressive mental degeneracy. Religious education must make sure of the aim that guides it in trying to shape human life. It must end these fatal incongruities in the lives of men and women who constitute the membership of the church. It must, in short, help to bring to the world what is implicit in the struggles of organic evolution, what the instincts of primitive man and the child have everywhere sought, what Jesus Christ himself revealed to men—a *biological salvation*.

How may this be done?

1. There must be created a leadership in religious education that knows the essential truths of modern science and believes in them unto salvation. First and foremost in this leadership must be the Christian ministry. The pastor of a church is the natural head of all the activities of that church. No effective advance can be made in Sunday-school work unless he is able intelligently and sympathetically to direct it. What can be done with a so-called "rational curriculum," if the pastor's influence is consciously or unconsciously creating irrational conditions under which the curriculum is to be carried out? What can be done with trained teachers who believe that the salvation of boys and girls is a product of all the convergent forces of their lives, if the pastor preaches sermons instructing these boys and girls that salvation is a metaphysical process, owing nothing whatever to natural causes? What can be done with Sunday-school pupils trained in the public schools to believe that truth comes to men through countless agencies, and that it is a holy thing whence-soever it comes, if the pastor preaches sermons affirming that the Bible is the final and complete repository of all truth? The fact is, neither a rational curriculum, nor rational teachers, nor rational pupils can exist in an atmosphere created by an irrational minister. They will flee it as a pestilence. It is utterly futile, therefore, to seek a reform in religious education that does

not involve as a primary consideration the creation of a new type of ministry.

How may such a ministry be created? First, by uniting for that purpose those who already believe that it is necessary; second, by working to spread the sentiment in favor of it; third, by developing some institution that will train men for religious work according to scientific standards—some university or theological seminary independent enough in resources to establish the required standards and provide facilities for giving the necessary training; fourth, by seeking out religious young men in the colleges and universities who have done substantial scientific work—some of it, at least, of a laboratory character—and getting them to train for this new type of ministry; and, fifth, by influencing churches at strategic points to select the men thus trained for their pastors. The training given should be based upon the Bible and the biological sciences. Whatever is necessary to make clear the place of the Bible in Christian civilization, and to interpret its message to the understandings and hearts of men, should be taught. In science there should be included such courses as laboratory work in physiology, neurology, and psychology, including the study of mental diseases, vice, and crime in institutions for defectives and delinquents; research work in sociology, especially as concerns the antisocial classes and institutions; the study of ethnology, with a view to discovering the origin and development of domestic, educational, moral, and religious customs and institutions; and educational psychology. In brief, the candidate for the ministry should be given facilities for graduate study and research in typical branches of knowledge that represent both the religious and the scientific experience of mankind.

With such a standard of training for the Christian ministry definitely erected, with a well-equipped institution provided for training men according to such a standard, and with a body of men, thus trained, located at important centers of religious work, the reformation of religious education would be fully inaugurated. The vast body of men and women, working more or less from the scientific point of view in the teaching and other pro-

fessions, would have their confidence restored in the church and would rally to its support. The theological seminaries would gradually be compelled to change their aims, subject-matter, and methods of education. A ministry would thus be created that would restore the church to its former position of leadership in the higher life of humanity.

Having provided a ministry that could effectively organize and manage religious education, the next step necessary would be the creation of a type of Sunday-school teachers trained to carry out its ideals and plans. This could easily be accomplished. The difficulty with the efforts already being made in some quarters to train religious teachers lies in the fact that the pastors of churches are too generally unable to sympathize with such a movement and to support it. Their conception of a trained teacher is too often that he should be a sort of body-servant for the pastor, and upon a servant's wages. The result is that the best types of young men are not attracted into the profession of religious teaching. With a new type of ministry this condition will be changed. The religious public will be led by its pastors to give financial support to Sunday-school work commensurate with its importance. These pastors will look for a type of trained teachers who are worthy of a freedom, dignity, and support correlative with their own. Agencies already in existence will supply such teachers more abundantly than at present; and a new profession, a teaching ministry, will be added to the leadership of religious education.

2. With a ministry that is capable of organizing and directing religious education according to scientific standards, and with at least a few trained teachers in each church who can do for the Sunday school what the best type of secular teachers are doing for the public school, we shall be ready for our "rational curriculum." Shaped under the direction of such a leadership, this rational curriculum will incorporate the same general aim and subject-matter that all effective agencies for human improvement have in common. Its primary aim will not be to shape religious beliefs or to increase the membership of the church. It will be, rather, to shape religious lives, and increase the membership of

a sane and efficient human society. Its material will not be limited to the Bible, but will be freely drawn from all sources that can make clear the highest ideals of man's destiny and the means of attaining them. It will start with the question : What do children most need at a given period of their lives to help them to live up to the full measure of their possibilities? And it will so choose its material and methods as most effectually to meet this need. In other words, the point of departure will be the child, and not the material to be taught. Knowledge of the former must condition the selection and use of the latter.

A detailed program of religious education that shall conform to scientific standards is probably not possible as yet. We need more complete knowledge upon many of the problems involved. There is doubtless an urgent need of such a detailed program, or at least there is an urgent inquiry for such in some quarters. But the wisest workers in religious education will be cautious about committing themselves to any lesson system at the present juncture. Secular education has had its centuries of educational reformers, from Rabelais to Spencer, without getting much of anything from them but principles and exhortations. In the hands of more practical educators, science has indeed been applied to educational programs for many years, and yet we are far from a general consensus of opinion upon the details of school curricula. What, then, may be expected of religious education at this time when science is just beginning to make an inventory of its problems?

But regarding the general character of religious education science has suggestions to offer that may help resourceful teachers, or bodies of teachers, to make their own programs, more or less experimentally, and thus not only to work out something better for themselves, but also to contribute of their experience to others. And such is the sort of help religious education needs at the present time more than any rule-of-thumb lesson system. Religion has suffered much from over-systematization, as have other departments of life. Systems of thought and conduct, indeed, we must have. But systems of thought and conduct are means to an end. They should not come till we are ready

for them, and they should go when we are through with them. With the mass of mankind, it must be confessed, systems of education, religious or other, have not been an unmixed good. They have tended to produce arrests of growth. Nothing is more tyrannous or repressive of individual initiative than a system of thought or conduct under the control of common minds. When protoplasm crystallizes, its equilibrium is stable, but its growth has ceased. The world is just now witnessing another breaking up of systems—lesson systems and other. There is a great deal of free protoplasm, seeking new lines of development. Let us rejoice, and scrutinize very carefully any lesson system that may fix the forms of religious education for another half-century.

A tentative application of science to religious education, which is intended, if the writer mistakes not, to stimulate teachers to individual initiative, and thus bring about an accumulation of experiences that shall give a basis for a truly rational curriculum, is illustrated in Professor George W. Pease's "A Course of Study in Outline for the Kindergarten Grades of the Bible School."¹ A less detailed application of scientific aims and material to adolescence has been made by the writer, in his work with several classes of young men. This work has been done in churches of different denominations, and has extended over three years, one course being given to two different classes in different years, and the other being given as a continuation of the first course with the class more recently taught. Most of the young men were clerks, mechanics, and business men. The following is the general topic of the first course, with the various subtopics:

LIFE-PROBLEMS FOR YOUNG MEN.

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| 1. The Struggle to Live. | 8. Work and Life. |
| 2. What Makes the Struggle Worth While? | 9. Play and Life. |
| 3. The Efficient Body. | 10. Fear and Life. |
| 4. The Efficient Mind. | 11. Faith and Life. |
| 5. Food and Life. | 12. Hate and Life. |
| 6. Drugs and Life. | 13. Love and Life. |
| 7. Clothing and Life. | 14. Religion and Life. |

¹ BIBLICAL WORLD, November and December, 1903, pp. 369-81, 451-58.

This work was based upon three great groups of needs that especially characterize adolescent life: (1) the needs involved in *self-adjustment*, that is, adjustment to physiological and psychological laws operating in each individual; (2) the needs involved in *social adjustment*, that is, adjustment to women, in the relations of courtship and marriage, and to men, as friends, business and political associates, etc.; and (3) *religious adjustment*, that is, adjustment to the great religious ideals of God and immortality of the soul, and to Jesus Christ as the revealer of the divine content of the universe. The specific aims were to reach these fundamental needs of young men, by giving them, in usable form, a knowledge of their own lives; the immutable laws of nature and human life, interpreted religiously; and the impulse to reverence these laws and obey them. The material of instruction was drawn from the Bible, science, and other departments of human experience. The biblical material was drawn mainly from the four gospels. The character and teachings of Christ were discussed in connection with every topic. Other Bible characters were also used, as well as characters taken from history and current life which illustrated the points under discussion. The following topical analysis will illustrate more in detail the aim and material:

LOVE AND LIFE.

1. Forms of Love, as Parental and Filial Affection, Friendship, the Love of Woman, Philanthropy.
2. Economy of Love, in Affecting the Survival of Animal Species and Races of Men.
3. Economy of Love in the Individual Life, as Affecting Physical Health, Sanity of Feelings, Vigor of Intellect, and Motives of Conduct.
4. Contrasts with Opposite Qualities of Anger, Envy, Malice, Hatred, Destructive Rivalry, etc.
5. Perverted Love, as Unhealthy Friendship, Unreasonable Passion for Women, Unwise Philanthropy.
6. The Standard of Christ—Christ's Personal Affections for Parents, for His Disciples, for Little Children, for Humanity, for God; and Christ's Explicit Teachings Regarding Love.

The work occupied one hour each Sunday, for nine months of the year. Two Sundays or more were given to each topic.

The first Sunday was occupied in an opening discussion, in which were sketched the problems involved, and in giving suggestions as to reading and observations. The second or more Sundays were given to informal conference, in which the young men took part.

This course, as already stated, was followed, in one class, by another, given with the same general aim, but working out the problems presented during the first year with especial reference to the adjustment of the young men's lives to Christ. The following is the list of topics :

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

1. A Work-a-Day View of Salvation.
2. The Ideal of Christlikeness in Christian Civilization.
3. The Reproduction of Character through Imitation.
4. Christ as a Physical Man (Physical Salvation).
5. Christ as an Emotional Man (Emotional Salvation).
6. Christ as an Intellectual Man (Intellectual Salvation).
7. Christ as a Man of Ideals (Salvation through Faith).
8. Christ as a Working Man (Salvation through Work).
9. Christ as a Business Man (Salvation through Business Integrity).
10. Christ as a Citizen (Salvation through Citizenship).
11. Christ as a Friend (Salvation through Friendship).
12. Christ as a Benefactor (Salvation through Self-Sacrifice).

The same general type of material was used in this course that was used in the first, and the method was the same. The following analysis of one of the topics will further illustrate:

INTELLECTUAL SALVATION.

1. Definition of Intellect as the Conscious Capacity of Adjustment to Facts.
2. Necessary Qualities of Intellectual Being are (*a*) Recognition of the Value of Facts, (*b*) Reverence for Facts, (*c*) Conscientious Quest for Facts.
3. Economy of the Intellect in the Development of Civilization and the Individual Life.
4. Arrests of Development, and Perversions of the Intellect, and Their Effects upon Life.
5. Christ's Relation to Truth.
6. Christ's Instructions to Others in Regard to Truth.
7. Christ's Command over the Facts and Forces of the Material World, and its Intellectual Quality.
8. Christ's Command over the Facts and Forces of the Spiritual World, and its Intellectual Quality.
9. The Religious Duty of Mental Growth.

It must not be expected that the application of science to religious education will be easy, or popularly received. The application of science to rational living, generally, is a slow and difficult task. Men once died like flies from the scourge of smallpox. Science has discovered a method of treatment that has practically given complete control over that disease. Yet there are still large numbers of people, presumably in their right minds, who refuse to be vaccinated. Men still die in large numbers from injudicious habits of living. Science has made available a mass of facts that show such mortality to be largely preventable. Yet, perhaps, the majority of men and women, also presumably in their right minds, serenely violate the laws of health; and, when the end comes, are reckoned as those afflicted by a mysterious Providence.

The scientific point of view of human life will make its way very slowly with feeble or prejudiced minds. It will, however, make sure headway with vigorous minds. And this is the class of minds that the church should always seek to reach. They must be reached to save the world from its sins. Such minds have always been, and will ever be, the leaders of mankind. Win them, and the masses of men will follow. The church must, indeed, have regard for ordinary men and women. They are in the majority. Their happiness or misery, their success or failure, bulks largely in the total welfare of society. But it is a fatal error to overlook the boys and girls, the men and women, who are not ordinary—who are the elect. What these boys and girls, and men and women, think and do, must, in all reason, be reckoned with. It will at last determine the thoughts and conduct of the ordinary people. This is the law of life. Here, too, we must learn of nature. She cares for all her creatures; but it is perfectly clear that she is ever on the alert for her exceptional creatures. These she makes much of. Through these she strives to help the less favored ones. Through these she steadily pushes forward her beneficent process toward a larger life for all.

Doubtless, men have always paid a certain homage to the crowd. They still do so. The church itself is no exception. It estimates itself, and it encourages the outside world to esti-

mate it, in numbers. And here resides a cause, not only of delay for the reform of education within the church, but also of distress for the souls of those who think in numbers. For, where the distress of the church is due to a falling off of attendance or contributions, it will inevitably estimate its improvements according to whether or not they promptly increase the size of the Sunday school or the roll of the church membership. Of course, in such a church there will be scant welcome for a type of educational reform that must grow slowly.

Numbers, indeed, are decreasing. And the end is not yet. More and more, the leading men of communities will find outlets for their religious lives more congenial to them than the church. More and more, the young men will disappear from Sunday schools and church pews. More and more, the rank and file of the faithful will follow the leaders who have found comfort elsewhere. What is to be done? Blame the departing throngs, and strive to coax or frighten them back? Perhaps. And yet, again perhaps, it may be well to confess that deeper causes are at work which it will require the keenest brains and the most loyal hearts to solve. Numbers are decreasing. Well, let us work, not primarily to fill their places with other crowds, but to build for a long future. Salvation does not come to the world through crowds, and never has. The sooner those engaged in religious education recognize this simple psychologic and historic truth, the better it will be for their peace of mind and their success. Let no church expect to stay the present exodus by some hastily contrived makeshift to catch the crowd. Let it find the few *elect* that it has left, and make these the prophets, the teachers, and the preachers of a new dispensation. Let those who really see the height and depth of this problem of saving the world from its sins cultivate the spirit of John the Baptist, crying aloud in the wilderness of pseudo-religious life; or of the Master himself, who went about doing good, meanwhile discovering an occasional soul who could share his thoughts and do his work. They that can do this thing shall see the triumph that must come, sooner or later, to those who, having caught the vision of a larger truth, steadfastly face the future with faith and hope.